

WHAT'S IN A LIFETIME?
AGES OF HUMAN LIFE METAPHORS:
A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The notion that human development passes through a series of stages is rooted in Antiquity. Roman writers identified three to seven distinct ages of man, proceeding from conception to death (Axelson, 1945, 1948; Slusanski, 1974; Traver Vera, 1999; Martín-Rodríguez, 2005). Medieval thinkers and artists formulated a variety of systems of age groups, dividing human life into three-, four-, five-, six-, seven-, ten-, and twelve-part schemata (Thonneau, 1998; Dubois, 1985, pp. 126-127; Ariès, 1973, pp. 38-39). Perhaps the best-known periodization of the human life cycle is found in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, where he describes seven stages of human life, beginning with “puking” infancy and ending with “second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.” (2. vii. 139-146). Among the different schemata, though, the most deeply-felt ones –and those whose linguistic expressions are more deeply entrenched– are the schemata in which human life is understood as divided in a series of stages corresponding to the cosmological cycles, conventionally structured in days and years (seasons and months). As Chauvin puts it, “le rythme naturel et le cycle cosmique proposent les modèles saisonniers pour lire le décours de la vie” (Chauvin, 1996, p. 7). This paper is endeavored to analyze the metaphors for the ages of human life.

Traditionally, metaphors have been understood as rhetorical figures, devices used in lofty style through which the writer can display creativity. Consequently, from this view and up to the 20th century, the study

of metaphor was restricted almost only to literary metaphors. However, during the last century, new perspectives for metaphor emerged that included the analysis of metaphors from everyday language; and some expressions that would not be considered metaphorical by traditional theories are now discussed. New views on the nature of metaphor were given, among others, by I. A. Richards, Max Black, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, John Searle and Paul Grice⁴⁵. Besides, a new conception of metaphor arose during the 1970s as a result of the attention paid by a group of linguists led by George Lakoff to the organization of conceptual systems. The cognitive linguistics model, which differs in some fundamental respects from traditional accounts, and also from the modern accounts mentioned above, is the one which will be taken as a framework in this paper (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1987, 1993; Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson changed radically the way we understand meaning by claiming that conceptual projections between knowledge domains and/or mental spaces are a fundamental feature of human mental processes. They rejected the classical approach to metaphor as mere ornamentation, and instead replaced it with its new position as a central and crucial aspect of our conceptual system. The term *conceptual metaphor* is indeed related to a primary tenet of this theory: metaphors are matter of thought and not merely of language, that is, metaphors are not just a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but a way of thinking about things. The basic assumption behind the writing of cognitive authors like Lakoff, Johnson,

⁴⁵ For a brief summary of the main theories on metaphor along history, cf. Preminger & Brogan (1993). Wahnón Bensusán (2008), who focuses on Paul Ricoeur's contributions to the theory of metaphor, also offers an overview of the non-cognitive theories on metaphor from Aristotle to the 20th century. The most notable contributions in the classical tradition were those by Aristotle (*Poetics*, 20-21, 1457b1-30; and *Rhetoric*, 3, 1404b-1411b), Cicero (*De oratore*, 3), and Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 8.6). Cf. Lausberg (1967, pp. 60-70). These views found continuity among medieval and European treatise writers from the 16th to the 18th century. A complete review of the major contemporary views can be seen in the introduction by Johnson (1981), and the chapter on metaphor in Johnson (1987, pp. 67-150), in which the theories by Black, Searle and Davidson are described. I. A. Richard's contribution is assessed by Bilsky (1952).

Turner and Kövecses is that through language we have access to the conceptual metaphors that structure our way of thinking.

From this perspective, metaphors are “devices that allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 117). They can thus be defined as a cross-domain mapping (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203), or, as Barcelona puts it, as “a cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain [source domain] is partially ‘mapped’, i.e. projected, onto a different experiential domain [target domain], so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one” (Barcelona, 2000a, p. 3)⁴⁶. Each mapping is a fixed pattern of conceptual correspondence across conceptual domains. As such, it defines an open-ended class of potential correspondences across inference patterns. When activated, a mapping may apply to a novel source domain knowledge structure and characterize a corresponding target domain knowledge structure.

Having accepted this, it seems reasonable to ask what typical target models and typical source models are. Typically, we rely on models of the concrete world to conceptualize abstract phenomena. In other words, our conceptualization of models of abstract categories is grounded in our experience with people, everyday objects, actions and events. In this sense, it is also important to remark that there are levels of specificity in conceptual metaphors, depending on the level of schemas they map, from generic- to specific-level metaphors. In Lakoff and Turner’s words, “generic level schemas have the power of generality, that is, the power to make sense of a wide range of cases. But they lack the power of specificity. Specific- level schemas are both concrete and information-rich” (1989, p. 165). These levels, though, are not separated, since specific-level metaphors are specifications of generic level metaphors.

Metaphors are part of the conceptual apparatus common to all members of a culture. This conventionality of metaphors seems to be at odds with

⁴⁶ The relationship between these domains is unidirectional, since a domain is usually conceived in terms of another and not the other way round. Lakoff and Johnson do not agree with Max Black’s (1962) interaction view of metaphors, according to which both target domain and source domain project themselves onto each other. In the Lakoff-Johnsonian model, only the source domain is projected onto the target domain. Cf. also Barcelona (2002, p. 214).

the imaginative and idiosyncratic nature of poetic metaphors. Nevertheless, from the cognitivist perspective, the author's creativity is fully at work indeed. It is devoted to the elaboration of complex metaphors upon the basic metaphorical system. Lakoff claims that great poets use basically the same tools we use: "poetic metaphor is, for the most part, an extension of our everyday, conventional system of metaphorical thought" (1993, p. 205)⁴⁷.

The aim of this paper is to study, through metaphorical expressions gathered from dictionaries and thesauri, the similarities and contrasts between three languages –English, Spanish, and French– in terms of the degree of conventionalization of the linguistic expressions resulting from the submappings of *A LIFETIME IS A DAY* and *A LIFETIME IS A YEAR*, and in terms of their linguistic exploitation. Some Latin parallels will be occasionally provided. The generic-level metaphor of which these metaphors are particularizations will be identified and described, as well as the set of submetaphors and metonymies interacting with them both at the conceptual and the textual level. Incidentally, the applicability of mechanisms for the interpretation of literary metaphors proposed by Lakoff and Turner (1989) and Lakoff (1993) will be tested.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

For this research the general methodology in the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor and Metonymy (CTMM) has been complemented with Barcelona's (2000a, 2002) more detailed guidelines for the identification and description of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, and with Barcelona's (2001) and Soriano's (2003) insights and contributions on metaphor and contrastive linguistics. The first part of the analysis of the ages

⁴⁷ According to Lakoff and Turner (1989, pp. 67-72), the writer can use four mechanisms to create new poetic metaphors based on the conventional specific-level ones: extending –which consists on taking a conventionalized metaphor and extending it by mapping additional slots–, elaborating– which consists on the nonconventional elaborating of schemas by filling in slots in unusual ways–, composing – where there is more than one conventional metaphor for a given target–, and questioning, that is, the challenging of conventional metaphor. Consequently, we should understand poetic metaphors in relation to metaphors in ordinary speech, since "the study of literary metaphors is an extension of the study of everyday metaphors" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203).

of human life metaphors carried out in this paper is based on the material documented in monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and other lexicographical works, such as dictionaries of idiomatic expressions and thesauri⁴⁸, but also extracted from previous literature on the topic, from various linguistic corpora (COCA, LexisNexis, CREA, Lexilogos), from literature and from the internet (forums, blogs). All these sources can provide us with conventionalized expressions which are an integral part of the way speakers think and express themselves every day.

An inventory of expressions (some of them conventional, and some less conventional) used to talk about ages of human life was compiled. Expressions were first grouped according to their source domain (day, year). Then, following Barcelona (2002, p. 47), the specific source and target domains in each group were identified and the metaphor characterized. This last step involved the realization of the following operations: 1) searching for other linguistic examples, 2) looking for additional semantic/pragmatic evidence, 3) checking whether there was a more general mapping, and 4) describing the expression's functioning in its context (i.e. what submappings are highlighted? Is there a combination with other metaphors and/or metonymies?).

In order to carry out the contrastive analysis proper, Barcelona's (2001) and Soriano's (2003) guidelines were taken into account. Taking Barcelona's (2001) work as a point of departure, four general parameters are being conventionally used in the contrastive metaphor analysis literature (Soriano, 2003; Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008):

- a. Existence or absence of the mapping: "the same metaphor may be said to exist in both languages if approximately the same conceptual source and the target can be metaphorically associated in the two languages even though the elaborations, the specifications and corresponding linguistic expressions of the metaphor are not exactly the same, or equally conventionalized, in both of them" (Barcelona, 2001, p. 137).

⁴⁸ "The investigation of a particular semantic field can be made more systematic with the use of a comprehensive thesaurus. It is conceivable that in the future linguistic metaphor databases based on concordance data might be set up along lines of on-line thesauri or dictionaries" (Deignan, 1999, p. 197).

- b. Degree of conceptual elaboration: “differences between both languages owing to the existence of a version of the metaphor in one language and its absence, or limited use, in the other” (2001, p. 137). This parameter is connected to the productivity of a given mapping in the system: the more new mappings it generates via entailment or specification, the more elaborated it will be.
- c. Degree of linguistic conventionalization: This parameter is understood as the extent to which an expression can be considered a socially sanctioned construction in the language, commonly used by speakers to talk about a given topic (ages of human life, in this case), as opposed to being a stylistically colorful expression.
- d. Degree of linguistic exploitation: This parameter, which is not specifically addressed, but not excluded, by Barcelona (2001), is introduced by Soriano (2003). It refers to “the productivity of the mapping in the language” (p. 109), being this productivity measured by the number of expressions resulting from that projection.

In this paper, since we are dealing with the detailed study of two individual metaphors, “the methodology should pay careful attention to the contrasts between the two languages in terms of the degree of conventionalization of the submappings of the metaphor and of their lexical and grammatical expression” (Barcelona, 2001, p. 126). As we are discussing metaphorical expressions surfacing in languages spoken in countries culturally and linguistically related, there are no significant contrasts in terms of conceptual elaboration, but only in terms of linguistic conventionalization and exploitation. These are, therefore, the aspects to be tackled in what follows.

3. GENERIC AND SPECIFIC-LEVEL METAPHORS

From the analysis of the linguistic material in our study, two broad sorts of metaphors were identified that participate in our understanding of ages of human life in the three languages considered. As indicated

above, there are generic-level and specific-level metaphors, being their level of specificity dependent on the level of the schemas they map. These are not separated individual levels, though. In fact, they are closely related since specific-level metaphors are instances of generic level metaphors. The cognitive metaphorical system is hierarchically organized, as shown in the analysis below.

3.1. GENERIC-LEVEL METAPHOR: THE GREAT CHAIN

Generic level metaphors have got neither a fixed specific level target nor a source domain. Moreover, there is not a designated ontological mapping of a list of slots in the source into a target. The generic-level metaphor on which the specific-level metaphors for ages of human life are created is the GREAT CHAIN metaphor. According to the “great chain of being” doctrine, human beings occupied the highest position within the system, followed by animals, plants, complex objects and natural physical things. This system led to two kinds of metaphors: the “basic great chain metaphor”, concerned with the relation of human beings to “lower” forms of existence, and “the extended” one, concerned with the relation of human beings to cosmos, the universe, and the gods. This generic metaphor allows us to comprehend human reality in terms of well-understood non-human realities, and conversely, it allows us to comprehend less well-understood aspects of the nature of other realities in terms of better-understood human characteristics (*apud* Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 172)⁴⁹. In our case, it is the “extended” GREAT CHAIN metaphor which provides the basis for the basic-level metaphors A LIFETIME IS A DAY and A LIFETIME IS A YEAR

3.2. BASIC-LEVEL METAPHORS

The bulk of the conceptual structure for ages of human life is provided indeed by what Lakoff and Kövecses call “basic level” metaphors

⁴⁹ Nevertheless, *cf.* n. 2. For a similar formulation of this view from a traditional, non-cognitive approach, *cf.* Rico (1986), who refers to the *scala naturae* or “great chain of being” as a key element for the understanding of Spanish –and Western– culture of the Renaissance; and Thonneau (1998), whose emphasis is on the relevance of these correspondences in English-speaking countries.

(Lakoff, 1987, p. 406). A lifetime is a span of time which can be split into several stages. As such, it can be understood metaphorically in terms of other conventional spans of time, such as a day or a year. A table of basic-level metaphors is provided below:

A lifetime is a day

A lifetime is a year

Basic-level metaphors can be further developed by means of metaphorical entailments –which give place to entailment submetaphors, e.g. MATURITY IS NOON, from A LIFETIME IS A DAY, or YOUTH IS SPRING, from A LIFETIME IS A YEAR. Even further submappings by means of analogical reasoning and inferences are possible, as in the projection of the months of a given season onto a given age of human life. These mappings are of two kinds: a) ontological correspondences, which specify the entities and the predicate that are mapped onto the target concept; b) epistemic correspondences, which specify the parts of our knowledge of the source concept that are mapped onto our knowledge of the target concept. A brief description and a list of some of the submappings for each metaphor are provided below.

3.2.1. A lifetime is a day

Ontological submappings

A day goes from morning to night, as life goes from infancy to old age. Thus, morning is youth, and night –the end of the day–, is the end of life, that is, death. The following figure lists some of the major structural analogies which facilitate the mapping from the source model DAY onto the target model LIFETIME. Lakoff and Turner’s list (1989, p. 6) has been completed⁵⁰.

1. Birth/infancy is dawn
2. Childhood is morning
3. Maturity is noon

⁵⁰ Lakoff and Turner refer only to five submetaphors: “in this metaphor, birth is dawn, maturity is noon, old age is twilight, the moment of death is sunset, and the state of death is night” (1989, p. 6).

4. Old age is twilight
5. (The moment of) death is sunset
6. (The state of) death is night
7. Afterlife is dawn

Knowledge (or epistemic) submappings

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 6), in the conventional metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY, the day is perceived as warm and the night as cold. In daytime, the sun shines and warms the earth, while in the evening it gets colder, as the sun sets. The same is true of the body temperature of a person who is alive; she is warm, while a dead person is cold. The warmth of the day is thus superimposed on the coldness of a dead person: “metaphorically, death’s coldness is night’s coldness, since death is night” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1989, p. 6). The notion that morning and noon are the warmest and more luminous parts of the day is mapped onto the proposition that the early periods of life are the more energetic periods in human life; the notion that twilight is the part of the day when light begins to disappear and it begins to get cooler is mapped onto the proposition that old age approaches death; and the notion that nights are cold and dark is mapped onto the proposition that death is coldness and darkness. This illustrates Barcelona’s (2002, p. 212) view that epistemic correspondences normally entail further ontological correspondences. Once we map the schema of a day onto the schema of a human lifetime, all our knowledge of the parts of the day can be potentially incorporated into our knowledge of the schema of ages of human life. The metaphors A LIFETIME IS A DAY, LIFE IS LIGHT, and LIFE IS HEAT are closely related in our conceptual system (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 6).

Selection of examples of linguistic realizations for the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY⁵¹

- (1a) No child shall die in the *dawn of life*.
- (1b) En la *aurora de la vida* fuimos bautizados

⁵¹ Italics are mine. The source is specified when the example is taken from a literary work or from the lyrics of a song.

(1c) 1. L'enfance est une *aube*. 2. Louis XIV, le roi soleil: l'*aurore* du soleil, le Soleil à son Zenith, le coucher du soleil [chapters in a biography].

(2a) In the *morning of life*, when its cares are unknown...

(2b) Recuerdos de la cándida *mañana de la vida*...

(2c) Dans ces jours [de l'enfance] si fleuris et si courts qu'on les nomme le printemps de la vie et le *matin de l'homme* (Murger, *Nuits hiver*, 1861).

(3a) I. NOON OF LIFE. 1. I stand in the sunny *noon of life*. Objects no longer glitter in the dews of morning, neither are yet softened by the shadows of evening. 2. I think that one of the first perils of the *noontide* is the eclipse of the spiritual relations of life. II. NOONDAY DEVIL: Roman Catholic vocation: Beware the *noonday devil*.

(3b) I. MEDIODÍA DE LA VIDA. ¿No se abre ante nosotros *el mediodía de la vida* como un territorio en el que, munidos de nuestra responsabilidad, podemos desarrollar las potencialidades que hemos venido madurando? II. DEMONIO MERIDIANO: Un diablo que hoy impera atacando vocaciones religiosas y laicas: el *demonio meridiano*.

(3c) I. MIDI DE LA VIE. Gandrax était alors absorbé par une de ces passions furieuses qu'il n'est pas rare de voir éclater au *midi de la vie* de l'homme (Feuillet, *Sibylle*, 1863). II. DÉMON MÉRIDIEN/DE MIDI: 1. Des moines qui, assis devant la fenêtre, voulaient quitter leur cellule sous l'influence du *démon méridien*... 2. Que cache le *démon de midi*? 3. Les ravages du « *démon de midi* » n'épargnent aucune catégorie sociale. 4. *Démon de midi*: les femmes n'y échappent pas...

(4a) You don't have to enter the *twilight years* isolated, disabled, feeling lonely, and some of the other problems that most of America associates with the elderly.

(4b) En el *ocaso de su vida*, su Santidad se dará un abrazo con Fidel.

(4c) Oh! les enfants, voilà la joie de *notre crépuscule*.

(5a) If I were you / I think I'd *die* / Here in the *sunset of my life* / The long and lonely night / Has just begun... (Janis Ian, "Sunset of your life").

(5b) El *sol se ha puesto* para el compositor español Antonio Vega (51), co-fundador de Nacha Pop.

(5c) Louis XIV, le roi soleil: l'*aurore* du soleil, le Soleil à son Zenith, le *coucher du soleil* [chapters in a biography]

(5d) *Nobis*, cum semel *occidit* brevis *lux* / Nox est perpetua una dormienda (Catullus V, 5-6)

(6a) 1. While many people die unexpectedly with no clue that the end is coming, metastatic cancer patients and those with other terminal diseases often do have the opportunity to prepare for the end. And how they deal may determine whether they *go* agonizingly or gently *into the night*. 2. Do not *go* gentle *into* that good *night* (Dylan Thomas, "Do not go gentle into that good night", 1951).

(6b) ...sellas la vida en lo mejor que tuvo, / cuando *la noche humana* se acabe ya del todo (Francisco Brines, “Collige, virgo, rosas”, *El otoño de las rosas*, 1987).

(6c) Pour m'enfoncer *dans la nuit* / Et renoncer à la vie / Je veux dans tes bras qui m'entourent / *Mourir* auprès de mon amour / Et m'endormir sur ton sourire (Demis Roussos, “Mourir auprès de mon amour”, 1977).

(6d) Nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux / *Nox est perpetua* una dormienda (Catullus V, 5-6)

(7a) Rebecca Sylvester died Mar. 6, 1899 AE 77 years. After the evening, *the morning*. For I know that my redeemer liveth. Cf. Farber (2003).

(7b) La muerte, para un creyente en Cristo, es ciertamente el punto final de la vida terrena, pero es también *la aurora de una vida nueva* y feliz.

(7c) Nous voulons *mourir*, car la fin, C'est *l'aube* de Plus Grande Vie!

3.2.2. A LIFETIME IS A YEAR

Ontological submappings

A lifetime can also be understood metaphorically as a year. The beginning of a lifetime, that is, youth, would correspond with the first months of the year, or with spring and even with summer. Consequently, the end of life would correspond with winter. The following figure lists some of the major structural analogies which facilitate the mapping from the source model YEAR onto the target model LIFETIME:

1. CHILDHOOD/YOUTH IS SPRING
2. EARLY ADULTHOOD IS SUMMER
3. MATURITY IS AUTUMN
4. OLD AGE AND DEATH ARE WINTER

Knowledge or epistemic submappings

Besides these ontological correspondences, the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A YEAR transfers a large number of attributes, entities and propositions from the experiential domain of the seasons of a year to the experiential domain of the ages of human life. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 18) explain that the conceptualization of life as spring and death as winter belongs to “a very natural metaphoric connection of life and death, since spring is the season in which new plant and animal life emerge while winter signals the dormancy or hibernation of plants and animals” (1989, p.

18). Again, it is our common knowledge of the world and our bodies which creates the metaphors we use (1989, p. 89). The notion that spring is the season when warmth and light return is mapped onto the proposition that childhood and youth are the liveliest periods of human life. The notion that winter is the season when it gets cooler and darker is mapped onto the proposition that old age and death are stages of coldness and darkness.

Selection of examples of linguistic realizations for the metaphor A
LIFETIME IS A YEAR⁵²

(8a) (TO BE IN) THE SPRINGTIME OF LIFE: 1. Physically she's fine. But hell's bells, girl, neither of us is in the *springtime of youth*. 2. She might have been taken for the very type of English *girlhood* in its sweetest *springtime* (W. Black, *Green Pastures* I. ii. 19, 1877). 3. Seize *spring's* wildflower moment (*Chicago Tribune*). See also (12).

(8b) I. (ESTAR EN) LA PRIMAVERA DE LA VIDA: 1. Así podremos evitar que la gente abandone voluntariamente el mundo en plena *primavera de su vida*. 2. Coged de *vuestra* alegre *primavera* el dulce fruto (Garcilaso de la Vega, "Soneto XXIII", 1543). II. TENER X PRIMAVERAS: 1. Alicia enamoró por primera vez a la cámara gracias a un videoclip: la descubrieron los de Aerosmith, y nos la ofrecieron cruzando el puente de niña a mujer con apenas *quince primaveras*. 2. Ella tiene *quince primaveras*, pocas mentiras que contar, / dos pendientes de primero y aún no ha visto el mar (Ismael Serrano, "Los paraísos desiertos", 1999). 3. El actor de *Taxi Driver* (65 otoños) y la escultural actriz y modelo (42 *primaveras*) viven un tórrido romance ante las cámaras.

II.A. TENER X ABRILES: "...porque me la ha regalado mi vecina que es una muchachita de *dieciocho abriles* y hay que verla, ¡oiga usted, señor obispo!"

(8c) I. ÊTRE DANS LE PRINTEMPS DE LA VIE / DANS SON PRINTEMPS: 1. Ce toit voit mon *printemps*, il verra mon hiver (Mme V. Hugo, Hugo, 1863). 2. La châtelaine n'était plus tout à fait au *printemps de la vie* (Ponson du Terr., *Rocamboles*, t. 1, 1859). 3. Dans ces jours [de l'enfance] si fleuris et si courts qu'on les nomme le *printemps de la vie* et le matin de l'homme (Murger, *Nuits hiver*, 1861). 4. Dans le plein éclat de ses vingt ans, un deuil intérieur assombrissait pour elle les plus claires journées (...). Elle se disait que *son printemps* était manqué

⁵² As in the previous case, italics are mine. As for the selection above, the source is specified when the example is taken from a literary work or from the lyrics of a song.

(Theuriet, *Mais. deux barbeaux*, 1879). 5. Viens cueillir la jolie fleur du *printemps*.

II. AVOIR X PRINTEMPS: 1. Sa petite fille Julie, de *vingt printemps* à peine... 2. Il ne faut pas se plaindre à *quatre-vingt printemps* (Michel Buhler, «La vieille dame»)

(8d) 1. At tu, dum *primi* floret *tibi temporis aetas*, / utere... (Tibullus I. 8, 47-48). 2. Dum *vernatus* sanguis ... / utere (Propertius IV.5, 57-58). 3. Dum licet, et *vernos* etiamnum educitis *annos* / ludite (Ovid, *Ars* III, 61-62). 4. nam tener et lactens puerique simillimus *aevo* / *vere* novo est: tunc herba *recens* et roboris *expers* / turget et insolida est et spe delectat *agrestes*; / omnia tunc *florent*, florumque coloribus *almus* / ludit ager, neque adhuc virtus in frondibus ulla est (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, 201-205). 5. Collige, virgo, rosas dum flos novus et nova pubes, / et memor esto *aevum* sic properare *tuum* (*De rosas nascentibus*, 48-49)

(9a) In the *summer of his years* (Bee Gees, «In the summer of his years»)

(9b) Quienes se encuentran en el *verano de la vida*, que es la flor de la juventud, quieren tener eterna juventud.

(9c) 1. *L'été de leur vie* est dominé par les affaires (Stendhal, *Hist. peint. Ital.*, t. 2, 1817). 2. Il venait d'avoir dix-huit ans / Il était beau comme un enfant / Fort comme un homme // C'était *l'été* évidemment / Et j'ai comptais en le voyant / Mes nuits d'automne (Dalida, "Il venait d'avoir dix-huit ans", 1973). Cf. Dalida's English version of this song, where references to the seasons are kept: I think he must have been eighteen / He was as fragile as a dream / Strong as a man // Seeing the *summer* in his eyes / I felt my autumn as it flies / Like grains of sand. In Dalida's Spanish version only the reference to summer is kept: La tarde que le conocí, / él acababa de cumplir / dieciocho años. // *Era el verano*, claro está, / y yo empezaba a soñar / con mi pasado.

(9d) transit in aetatem post ver robustior annus / fitque valens iuvenis: neque enim robustior aetas / ulla nec uberius, nec quae magis ardeat, ulla est (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, 206-208).

(10a) 1. We want to spend our *autumn years* smelling roses, not exhaust fumes from trucks and bulldozers. 2. In the *autumn of my years* I noticed... / Do I tell him that I've reached the autumn of my life...? ("Autumn of my life", Bobby Goldsboro, 1968).

(10b) I. (ESTAR EN) EL OTOÑO DE LA VIDA: Goza labios y lengua, machácate de gusto / con quien se deje y no permitas que el *otoño* / te pille con la piel reseca y sin un hombre (Luis Alberto de Cuenca, «Collige, virgo, rosas»).

II. TENER X OTOÑOS: El actor de *Taxi Driver* (65 *otoños*) y la escultural actriz y modelo (42 primaveras) viven un tórrido romance ante las cámaras.

(10c) I. L'AUTOMNE DE LA VIE; ETRE DANS SON AUTOMNE:

1. Cette belle saison, dans sa maturité, me fait faire un retour sur moi-même. Quoique jeune encore, je penche vers *mon automne*... (Michelet, *Journal*, oct. 1839). 2. Le malheureux père se jeta sur un divan... pleurant de ces larmes rares, maigres, qui roulent entre les paupières des gens de cinquante-six ans, sans en sortir... une des dernières rosées de *l'automne* humain (Balzac, *Modeste Mignon*, 1844). Vid. also (9c).

II. AVOIR X AUTOMNES: Maryelle compte aujourd'hui vingt-cinq *automne*s; elle n'est qu'un peu pâlie, toujours svelte, excitante,... (Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, *Contes cruels*, Maryelle, 1883) (10d) excipit autumnus, posito fervore iuventae / maturus mitisque inter iuvenemque senemque / temperie medius, sparsus quoque tempora canis (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, 209- 211).

(11a) 1. Teach me to go inside all the *winter of my life*, into the darkness, to go inside and listen.

2. Those *winter days of life*, however, bring an understanding and perspective that can lead us to the true joys and pleasures of life. 3. The Lord is a personal God; He is very particular. He came to Sarah's *wintertime of life* (...) the son born to Sarah was Isaac. 4. Up to forty a woman has only forty springs in her heart. After that age she has only forty winters. 5. When forty *winters* shall besiege thy brow / And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field, / Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now, / Will be a tottered weed of small worth held. See also (12).

(11b) 1. Dedicado a todas esas personas tan queridas que van entrando en ese *invierno de la vida*. 2. Llenas las ramas del corazón de verdes ilusiones, para ser desprendidas poco a poco hasta llegar al *invierno de la vida*.

(11c) 1. Ce toit voit mon printemps, il verra *mon hiver* (Mme V. Hugo, Hugo, 1863). 2. Pour moi, si, déjà dans *l'hiver de ma vie*, je ne suis pas destiné à te voir dans l'été de la tienne. (Bern. de St-P., *Harm. nat.*, 1814). 3. Je suis arrivé à cet âge plus calme où les rêves et les grands désespoirs sont un peu finis : (...) on s'arrange pour jouir de ce qui reste de bon dans la vie, avant *l'hiver* qui approche (Loti, *Journal*, t. 1, 1878-81).

(11d) inde *senilis hiems* tremulo venit horrida passu, / aut spoliata suos, aut, quos habet, alba capillos (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, 212-213).

(12) SPRING IS YOUTH + WINTER IS OLD AGE: I. MAY-DECEMBER : 1. At the other [table], what appeared to be a *May-December* pairing-a gray-haired man with an attractive younger woman who looked only slightly too old to be his daughter — was being a bit more lively. I. 2. *May-December* romances have always been hot gossip in Hollywood. I. 3. A happy *May-December* match promises never to be the same again after the young wife's blue lace girdle turns up among the lost-and-found

items of an all-night country club bacchanal. I.4. DIED. Adriana Ivancich, 53, aristocratic Venetian socialite and prizewinning artist of dust covers for Ernest Hemingway's books, who as a beauty of 18 was beloved of the aging, alcoholic writer and inspired Renata (...). In a 1980 book, *The White Tower*, she contended that the love story had been more a father-daughter relationship than a *May-December* scandal. II. 1. I. MAY-JANUARY: "Earl Gui is slain by the German emperor at the behest of his Scottish wife, as a result of a *May- January* marriage gone wrong". II. 2. I. MAY-NOVEMBER: "The *may-november* marriage of 35- year-old "Charlie" Hendricks and wealthy Steven Armstrong, who is 30 years her senior, is viewed by his three grown children as one based entirely on the bride's quest for his money".

3.2.3. Interaction of metaphor and metonymy

According to Barcelona (2000a, 2002), the patterns of interaction between metaphor and metonymy –one of the issues in the CTMM which requires more clarification– could be reduced to two general types:

I) Interaction at the purely conceptual level, with two subcases:

(a) the metonymic conceptual motivation of metaphor, and

(b) the metaphorical conceptual motivation of metonymy; and

II) the purely textual co-instantiation of a metaphor and a metonymy by the same linguistic expression.

The cases which concern us here are I (a) and II, that is, the metonymic conceptual motivation of metaphor, and the purely textual co-instantiation of a metaphor and a metonymy by the same linguistic expression.

It has long been noticed that many metaphors are motivated conceptually by metonymy, which is closer to their experiential basis. Radden (2003) does not claim that every metaphor is necessarily based on metonymy, but he argues in favor of the acceptance of metonymy-based metaphor as an analytical category which is needed to account for the experiential basis of a great number of metaphors. Radden surveys a sample of metonymy-based metaphors, classifying his material into four main groups⁵³. All of them are but subcases of the phenomenon

⁵³ In the first group, both source and target have a common experiential basis; the second group is based on conversational implicature; the third group is based on category structure;

described by Barcelona (2000a, 2002) as “metonymic conceptual motivation of a metaphor”. In the metaphors A LIFETIME IS A DAY and A LIFETIME IS A YEAR both source and target have a common experiential basis, as it has been indicated above. These are metaphors based on the experiential correlation between life, activity, and light, on the one hand, and death, inactivity, and darkness, on the other hand⁵⁴.

The purely textual co-instantiation of metaphors and metonymies is illustrated, for another thing, by some linguistic expressions arising from the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A YEAR: tener X primaveras (and tener X abriles), tener X otoños, avoir X printemps, avoir X automnes. These expressions can be explained as resulting from the combination of the metaphorical submappings YOUTH IS SPRING or MATURITY IS AUTUMN with the metonymy SEASON FOR YEAR, a subtype of the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy.

4. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

4.1. OVERVIEW

In their conceptualization of the ages of human life, English, Spanish and French share mappings at the basic-level of specificity –A LIFETIME IS A DAY, A LIFETIME IS A YEAR–, but there are further similarities between their respective linguistic systems. All of them share, of course, the same generic-level metaphor –GREAT CHAIN, in its extended version–, and they exhibit a similar set of metaphors related to the basic level of specificity. And all of them exploit the same entailment submappings by virtue of which each stage of human life is conceptualized as a part of a day or a year.

Nevertheless, even if English seems to have the same cognitive model that underlies the conceptualization of the ages of human life in French and Spanish, there are some differences too. As stated before, two parameters will be used to analyze the differences between the three languages which this paper considers: degree of linguistic

in the fourth group he includes metaphors based on metonymies arising on the basis of cultural models.

⁵⁴ On the plausibility on claiming a metonymic motivation for conceptual metaphor, *cf.* Barcelona (2000b).

conventionalization of resulting expressions; and degree of linguistic exploitation of the submappings. The following figure anticipates the findings to be presented in this paper (table 1).

TABLE 1.

English-Spanish-French	Mappings
Differences due to the degree of linguistic conventionalization	MATURITY IS NOON is more conventionalized in French than in Spanish and English. MATURITY IS AUTUMN is more conventionalized in French than in Spanish and English. OLD AGE IS WINTER is more conventionalized in English than in French and Spanish.
Differences due to the degree of linguistic exploitation	YOUTH IS SPRING is more linguistically exploited in Spanish than in English and French. MATURITY IS AUTUMN is more linguistically exploited in Spanish and French than in English. OLD AGE IS WINTER is more linguistically exploited in English than in French and Spanish.

Fuente: elaboración propia

It is important to notice, for one thing, that these parameters can overlap to a certain extent. For example, some of the interlinguistic differences due to the degree of linguistic conventionalization of a given submetaphor cannot be considered apart from their degree of linguistic exploitation. Consequently, in some cases I have dealt with them simultaneously. For another thing, it should be remarked that these findings are only tentative. A more rigorous contrastive analysis should involve, on the one hand, the examination of more linguistic material, as well as, at least as the degree of linguistic exploitation is concerned, statistical calculations that have not been carried out for this paper.

4.2. DIFFERENCES DUE TO THE DEGREE OF LINGUISTIC CONVENTIONALIZATION

As stated before, this parameter is understood as the extent to which an expression can be considered a socially sanctioned construction in the language, commonly used by speakers to talk about a given topic (ages of human life in this case), as opposed to being a creative, colorful expression. Except for a few cases, English, Spanish, and French exhibit

for each conceptual metaphor a set of expressions which seem to be equivalent in terms of linguistic conventionalization (equally colorful or non-colorful).

Among the few cases in which there are differences due to the degree of linguistic conventionalization, there is, to begin with, the MATURITY IS NOON submapping. This submapping produces, on the one hand, a series of linguistic instantiations which seem equivalent in terms of conventionalization, since all of them are rather novel expressions: *noon of life* (3a.I.1), *noontide* (3a.I.2), *mediodía de la vida* (3b.I.1), and *midi de la vie* (3c.I.1). On the other hand, it produces a particular linguistic expression –*demon de midi* (3c. II.2-4)– which is much more conventionalized in French than in Spanish or English, where the corresponding realizations –*demonio meridiano* (3b.II) and *noonday devil* (3a.II)– occur only in very specialized contexts (religious or academic writing). Thus, this case deserves special attention.

The origin of the expression *noonday demon* is to be found in the Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm 90:6b (δαίμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ, *daemonio meridiano*). It entered the writings of the Desert Fathers through the liturgy. Evagrius links it with the experience of anchorites and equates it with the concept of “acedia”, meaning discouragement, lack of strength, and a distorted perception of reality. Through John Cassian’s *Institutiones*, the expression also entered coenobitic life in the West, connoting the temptation of leaving the monastery or the inability to engage fully in the practices and daily tasks formerly enjoyed⁵⁵. The French expression *démon méridien* (3c.II.1), together with *demonio meridiano* (3b.II) and *noonday devil* (3a.II), should be understood within this context. Later, the French expression *démon de midi* (3c.II.2-4) was taken up, first by some psychologists and psychoanalysts and then by general speakers, to refer to a kind of depression and alienation that often begins to manifest itself in mid-life and that usually involves the

⁵⁵ On the cultural history of the noonday devil, cf. Caillois (1937), LeMoing (2003) and Prigent (2005). The latter situates this concept within a history of melancholy and depression from Ancient Greece to present day.

pursuit of young boys and girls by the individuals experiencing the crisis, who seek a final fling before starting to decline.

In spite of its many interpretations and developments through the centuries, the *démon de midi* remains a temptation that can hit any person and turn him or her away from important choices made previously in life, alienating his or her freedom. This would be an instance of A PERSONAL CRISIS IS A DEVIL, a special type of POSSESSION metaphor, whose set of metaphors was first described by Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp. 269-ff) as part of their metaphorical system for the characterization of the self⁵⁶. Lakoff and Johnson argue that two related possession metaphors are construed on the basis of this conceptualization: SELF CONTROL IS POSSESSING AN OBJECT (the subject possesses the self), and TAKING CONTROL OF ANOTHER SELF IS TAKING ANOTHER'S POSSESSION (1999, pp. 270-274). The latter, according to Lakoff and Johnson, typically involves the devil, an alien or a spirit. The expressions δαίμονιου μεσημβρινοῦ, *daemonio meridiano*, *démon méridien* –which entered Ancient French in the 14th century–, *demonio meridiano* and *noonday devil*, taken in their technical sense, are realizations of this metaphor⁵⁷, which is not always co-instantiated with the metaphor MATURITY IS NOON, since the original expression referred only to the zenith or hottest moment of the day after long hours of prayer or labour. It is only in the French expression *démon de midi* where noonday is no longer the zenith of the day, but the zenith or the middle of life and, as a consequence, where both metaphors always co-occur.

Why has this expression been conventionalized in French and not in English or Spanish, where the expressions *mid-life crisis* and *crisis de los cuarenta* (*cincuenta*) are preferred to the already existent (though not conventionalized) *noonday devil* and *demonio meridiano*? Perhaps

⁵⁶ According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), human beings think of themselves as a dual unit composed of one subject and one or more selves. In this conceptualization, the Subject corresponds to the part of the person that experiences consciousness, reason, will, and judgement. It is also “the locus of a person’s Essence –that enduring thing that makes us who we are” (p. 269). The Self would be the part of the person comprising the body, social roles, past states and actions in the world. We understand our identity and inner life as the result of the interaction between the “essential subject” and the “behavioral self” (pp. 269-270).

⁵⁷ Cf. also Barcelona (1986, p. 15).

this is best explained resorting to Zinken (2003: 508-509), according to whom there are “correlational metaphors” –which are based on embodied images schemas and emerge from experiential correlations– and “intertextual metaphors”, which are not “expressions of conceptual metaphors motivated by body experience [but] are organized in semi-otic experience: stereotypes, culturally salient texts, films, pieces of art, school knowledge and so forth” (p. 509)⁵⁸. The French expression *démon de midi* may have become conventionalized due to M. Bourget’s novel *Le Démon de midi* (1914), where Louis Savignan, a distinguished defender of the Church, meets at forty-three the woman to whom, twenty years before, he had been engaged and whom he had deeply loved. She is married, but the old passion is reignited and Savignan becomes an adulterer under circumstances of peculiar dishonor and degradation. The “démon de midi” possesses him: the passion of youth, intensified and distorted by the passing of time and the approach of age assails and destroys his moral nature in the noontide of life. This novel, which made a sensation in France at the beginning of the 20th century, may have determined the conventionalization of the linguistic expression under study.

In terms of linguistic conventionalization, there is another interesting aspect to consider. The Spanish expressions *tener X primaveras* (8b.II.1, 8b.II.2, 8b.II.3), *tener X abril* (8b.II.A), and *tener X otoños* (10b.II), together with the French expressions *avoir X printemps* (8c.II.1, 8c.II.2) and *avoir X automnes* (10c.II), however stylistically colorful, are widely used not only in literature, but also in popular music, journals and magazines. These expressions have no equivalent linguistic instantiation in English:

*She is fifteen springs / aprils.

*She is forty autumns.

⁵⁸ However, it should be noted that, even if the source domain DEVIL is motivated in this case by cultural knowledge, the corresponding expression is based on a possession metaphor which is directly derived from the experiential correlation of holding onto a thing and controlling it. Cf. Lakoff and Johnson (1999, p. 272).

However, they are intelligible as creative realizations of the conceptual metaphor, as in the proverb “Up to forty a woman has only forty springs in her heart. After that age she has only forty winters [in her heart]” (11.a.4), or in the famous first quatrain of the second Shakespearean sonnet (11.a.5), whose first line reads, “When forty winters shall besiege thy brow...”⁵⁹. The expressions evidencing the OLD AGE IS WINTER submetaphor in combination with the MONTH FOR A YEAR (PART FOR WHOLE) metonymy, are not colorful expressions, as is the case of those evidencing YOUTH IS SPRING or MATURITY IS AUTUMN in French or Spanish. They are rather an example of the creative use of language. At any rate, it becomes apparent that, for these expressions, MATURITY IS AUTUMN is more conventionalized in Spanish and French, while OLD AGE IS WINTER is more conventionalized in English.

4.3. DIFFERENCES DUE TO THE DEGREE OF LINGUISTIC EXPLOITATION

As stated above, this parameter refers to “the productivity of the mapping in the language” (Soriano, 2003, p. 109). This productivity is measured by the number of expressions resulting from that projection. A rigorous account of this type of difference would involve statistical calculations, but, following Soriano’s (2003) model, some more coarse-grained differences in terms of linguistic productivity have been identified and described.

The entailment submetaphor YOUTH IS SPRING seems to be more linguistically exploited in Spanish than in any other of the two languages. At least three different expressions can be defined as linguistic instantiations of that particular submetaphor (8b):

Estar en la primavera de la vida.

Tener X primaveras.

Tener X abriles.

⁵⁹ For an analysis of the Shakespearean *Sonnets* from a Lakoffian perspective, cf. Flores Moreno (1998- 1999).

For these linguistic realizations, equivalent expressions can be found in French only for the first and the second:

Être au printemps de la vie / dans son printemps

Avoir X printemps.

In English only the first phrasing is possible:

To be in the springtime of life

There are no cases in which the metaphorical submapping YOUTH IS SPRING is combined with the MONTH/SEASON FOR YEAR (PART FOR WHOLE) metonymy. The co-instantiation of this particular submetaphor and this particular metonymy occurs only in rare cases, as in the proverb mentioned above (11a.4) and cannot be reckoned as a different linguistic realization. It is important to notice that in these cases the standard construction to be X springs is not possible. Only more syntactically complex constructions, like to have X springs/winters in one's heart, allow for the quantification.

The MATURITY IS AUTUMN submetaphor seems, for another thing, equally exploited in Spanish and French. In this case, we have in Spanish only two different expressions:

Estar en el otoño de la vida.

Tener X otoños.

In French the parallel expressions exist:

L'automne de la vie / être dans son automne

Avoir X automnes

Once again, the combination of the metaphor MATURITY IS AUTUMN and the metonymy MONTH FOR A YEAR seems not allowed in English, where only the autumn of one's life expression is used.

As a further example denoting a different degree of linguistic exploitation of the OLD AGE IS WINTER metaphor, there is an English idiom which evidences at the same time the OLD AGE IS WINTER and the YOUTH IS SPRING submetaphors: *may-december couple*. The expression, which is widely used nowadays and has no Romance equivalent, is a common

cliché to describe a romantic relationship of any kind –couple, pairing, match, romance, wedding and, more commonly, marriage– between a young person and a person who is considerably older, usually a man courting a much younger girl (12.I.1-4). This idiom appears more commonly in the form *may-december*, but there are other less idiomatic realizations: *may-january* (12.II.1), and *may-november* (12.II.2). One should question why there exist in English this specific realization that has no parallel in any other language, and, once again, culture may provide the answer. Socio-cultural experience shapes indeed our metaphors, which are influenced, among other factors, by «specific experiences provided by the environment, the socio-cultural context and the communicative situation» (Kövecses, 2006). In what is, perhaps, an example of paraetymology, it is said that the currency of the linguistic expression May-December is owing to «September Song», written by Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson and famously sung by Frank Sinatra (1915-1998):

When I was a young man,
a-courting the girls,
I'd play me a waiting game:
if a maid refused me
with a toss of her curls,
I'd let the ol' world
take a couple of twirls...
But it's a long, long time
from May to December,
and the days grow short
as you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
One hasn't got time
for the waiting game...

However, the motivation could be traced back to Chaucer's «Merchant's Tale», which narrates the story of the marriage between an old man called Sir January and a lovely young girl called May⁶⁰. In the 14th century when Chaucer was writing, the year officially began on the Feast

⁶⁰ Although nowadays this is a regional and archaic use, in Chaucer's times a *may*, a word which, according to the *OED*, comes perhaps from Old English *mæg*, was a 'maiden', a 'virgin', a 'young woman'. This case of homonymy could have favored the consideration of the month of may as the most representative of spring.

of the Ascension (March 25th), but in the 18th century, when Britain adopted the Gregorian Calendar, New Year was shifted to January 1st. Once January was the beginning of the year, and December was the end, the proverbial expression very naturally changed from «May-January» to «May-December». Perhaps, as in the case discussed in section 4.2., the linguistic instantiation of the combination of the YOUTH IS SPRING and OLD AGE IS WINTER submetaphors, which is culture-specific, can be said to be based on «semiotic experience», and, more precisely, on a very specific culturally salient text: the *Canterbury Tales*. Geoffrey Chaucer, who has not only been credited with the fatherhood of English poetry, but also been recognized as one of the Founding Fathers of the English language (Baugh & Cable, 2005, p. 193; Bragg, 2003, pp. 69-79), may have had a part in the conventionalization of the expression.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided some results on the contrastive study of the conceptualization of the ages of human life in English, Spanish and French. Two general types of metaphor have been reported and described to a greater or lesser extent: generic and basic-level metaphors. Both the contrast between English, Spanish and French, and the similarities or the motivation and internal structure of the shared mappings have been discussed.

Our overall results suggest that the conceptualization of ages of human life in these languages is very similar. This is not surprising, considering, on the one hand, that our conceptual systems are based on embodied experiences and cultural constraints, such as the correlation between life, light, and warmth, and, on the other hand, that French-, English- and Spanish-speaking countries are to some extent culturally and linguistically related, since the three civilizations are indebted to Classical culture and Christianity. Although in the contrastive analysis there are no language-specific basic-level metaphors, nor language-specific submetaphors, it could be argued that the expressions resulting from some submetaphors –MATURITY IS NOON, MATURITY IS AUTUMN or OLD AGE IS

WINTER— are more conventionalized in particular languages. However, further research and the examination of more linguistic data, together with statistical calculations, would be needed to prove this.

What is apparent is the fact that some of the linguistic realizations are culture-specific. For example, the origin of the French idiom *démon de midi*, which I have demonstrated to be an instantiation of two metaphors—A PERSONAL CRISIS IS A DEVIL, and MATURITY IS NOON—, may find its source in Paul Bourget’s novel, as an example of “intertextual metaphors” (Zinken, 2003). The same occurs with the English idiom *May-December marriage*, in which the co-instantiation of the metaphors YOUTH IS SPRING, and OLD AGE IS WINTER can be appreciated. This expression could be also connected to such relevant texts as Chaucer’s “The Merchant’s Tale”.

Without neglecting the importance of the fact of metaphors being directly derived from experience, this paper has contributed to demonstrate that claims for culture-specific analysis are justified. The issue of metaphor motivation and the role of culture is currently witnessing an increasing interest in the study of situated metaphorical expressions, instead of de-contextualized idiomatic ones. This interest is connected to the reinforcing of the importance of culture in conceptual metaphor, an aspect that many felt to be neglected because of the great importance given to the study of the embodied nature of conceptual structures. In this paper both aspects have been demonstrated to be of crucial importance.

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